

Ruth Graham dies at 87

by UPI

MONTREAT, N.C. - Ruth Graham, who shared evangelist Billy Graham's life from their student days into retirement, died Thursday at her home in North Carolina at age 87.

Billy Graham and the couple's five children were with her when she died at their home in Little Piney Cove, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association said.

Ruth Bell, the daughter of missionaries in China, wanted to be "an old-maid missionary," two Graham biographers wrote in Time magazine. But she met Billy Graham at Wheaton College in Illinois and married him when they graduated.

"We were called by God as a team," Graham said of his wife.

As Billy Graham's "life partner," Ruth Graham played a more private role. President Richard Nixon's daughter, Julie, later remembered her kindness during the Watergate scandal. Ruth Graham also counseled those who wrote her or sought her out during her husband's Crusades.

She also gave her husband tough advice, reportedly kicking him under the dinner table when President Lyndon Johnson asked for advice on a vice president, to signal her husband to stay out of politics. Earlier that year, when Graham was rumored to be considering a presidential run, she was even tougher -- hinting a campaign might cost him his marriage.

"If you run, I don't think the country will elect a divorced president," she told him.

The family plans a private funeral followed by a public memorial service at a date to be decided.

Copyright © 2007, by United Press International. All Rights Reserved.

Ruth Graham dies at 87 by UPI